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Palestine

Position of the Mufti

18-380
2.7.48.

The following, dated June 24th, comes from a tried Palestine Arab source with good contacts, who obtained his information partly in Cairo and partly in Amman.

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6/7/48

The Mufti's emissaries in Palestine

(i) In early June the Mufti sent a team of selected liaison officers to Gaza from Egypt. They were under Amil Ali and were to make preparations for the later arrival in Gaza of the Mufti himself.

(ii) The Egyptian Military Governor of Gaza, acting on instructions from Cairo, at first tried to co-operate with the Mufti's mission and openly sided with him in the disputes, which quickly broke out, between the mission and the local population, especially the Jaffa refugees. Shortly after the truce however, the Mufti's mission was forced to return to Cairo as a result of persistent opposition and threats of violence from the Jaffa refugees, who were backed by the majority of the Gaza population.

(iii) After the conclusion of the truce the Mufti ordered his representatives in southern Palestine to proceed to Cairo, and those in the north to Damascus, to receive fresh instructions. These orders were passed over the Mufti's wireless stations operating at Ain Sinia on the Jerusalem-Nablus road and in Jerusalem and Gaza.

The Mufti and the Ikhwan

(iv) The Mufti appears to have exercised some influence over members of the Ikhwan al Muslimin now serving in the Egyptian army in Palestine, since the latter have been putting out propaganda, clearly inspired by the Mufti, that if Palestine falls to King Abdullah its absorption by British Imperialism is inevitable. The Mufti's relations with the Ikhwan in Syria and the Lebanon are also reported to be good.

Palestine feeling towards Arab military governors

(v) The Egyptian military governors in Gaza and Hebron (which are under dual administration, with Transjordan governors as well) have recently made much of news that free food from Egypt will shortly be distributed and that the administrative services will be revived, the object being to improve relations with the local population, which are still only good on the surface. The majority of the local population have lost their early enthusiasm for the Egyptian army after seeing their towns occupied (with the usual discomforts of military occupation) for what they consider political rather than military reasons, since Egyptians did not support Arab Legion fighting in Jerusalem.

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(vi) Jamil al Murti, the Iraqi Minister in Jordan, said in private conversation that Izzat Pasha and the Syrian Prime Minister, Jamil Mardam, have recently shown greater sympathy for the Mufti's view.

(vii) The Mufti's influence is certainly gaining ground in those parts of Palestine now occupied by the Arab Legion, but inefficiently administered by Transjordan military governors, particularly owing to the fact that no machinery has been established for essential food and health services.